

ODP Tactical Interoperable Communications Workshop

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: What is the purpose of the Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP)?

A1: The purpose of the TICP is to serve as a planning tool for Site's to exercise interoperable communications and to meet the Congressional mandate that grant recipients develop a tactical plan as part of the grant requirements. The specific exercise scenario for the Plan relates to Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5, *Management of Domestic Incidents*, and the DHS *National Incident Management System (NIMS)*.

Q2: How can ODP help us with the TICP?

A2: The Department will provide, on a first-come first-served basis to any site or state, "no-cost" technical assistance in developing and exercising its TICP through the **Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP)**.

ICTAP has assigned a site manager and a site technical lead to each UASI grantee and to those states without a designated Urban Area. These individuals (and support staff) are available on a first-come, first-serve basis to meet with a site's governance, operations and technical working groups and to facilitate TICP development and documentation, and table top exercises.

The process for requesting ICTAP assistance is detailed in Question 19 below. Sites and states are encouraged to contact their respective DHS Preparedness Officer in the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness about any questions.

Q3: How will the Department of Homeland Security evaluate a site or state's Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP)?

A3: There is no "pass" or "fail" for a site or state's TICP. DHS Preparedness Officers and subject matter expert staff will review and evaluate each TICP on its own merits. ODP recognizes that a site or state's requirements for interoperable communications will be specific to its own needs.

Q4: Does the TICP replace our strategic, long-term plan?

A4: Not at all. While the TIC Plan is designed to prepare agencies for tactical interoperable communications during incidents, its development should keep the long-term plan in mind. The TICP provides a snapshot of what radio equipment and methods

your site currently has available and how those would be used in a tactical situation, like the planned IED scenario.

Q5: What agencies should be included in the Plan? Do federal and state responders need to be included in the plan?

A5: Sites should include, at a minimum, in the TICP those agencies that are represented in their Urban Area Working Group (if applicable). While federal, state and additional local agencies are not required to be represented in the Plan, sites should consider the role of these agencies in an incident tactical response and include them as deemed appropriate.

Q6: What disciplines should be represented in the plan?

A6: At a minimum, law enforcement, fire and EMS should be represented in the Plan.

Q7: How does the TIC Plan relate to the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Exercise requirement in the FY 2005 Grant Guidance? Where can I find detailed information on the IED scenario?

A7: The planning and exercise of a site's response to an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) incident was a separate requirement of the FY 2005 Grant Guidance (See Page 50 of the Guidance). Sites will have six months from the release of the scenario by ODP for planning their response validation process, to be conducted within 12 months following submission of that Plan. Validation of the TICP should be included as part of each site's planning for a live validated exercise. Details about the IED scenario will be sent to UASI sites and states separately. If a site has already tested or plans to field test an interoperable communications plan in the next 12 months involving a scenario like that for the IED scenario, it may coordinate with its ODP Preparedness Officer about using that exercise in lieu of the IED scenario.

Sites should develop the interoperable communications plan portion of the planned IED incident response validation in Section 5 of the TICP. A template and example of a TICP are available through your ICTAP contacts.

Q8: Do all UAWG agencies need to demonstrate communications interoperability in the IED scenario?

A8: While the Overall TICP plan should include all of the jurisdictions represented in the Urban Area, the Incident Communications Plan (Section 5 of the TICP) for the IED should only include those agencies that would respond to the incident.

Q9: We are purchasing communications equipment with 05 funds, should our plan include these assets?

A9: The TICP is designed to help jurisdictions identify the communications assets that they currently have and develop operations policies for the use of that equipment in a incident. Only equipment that is expected to be in operational use by the Oct. 1 planning deadline should be included in the TICP.

Q10: Our state does not have an UASI site. Do we have to designate a specific city or can we focus on a region of the state?

A10: While the guidance recommends the use of a metropolitan area, some states have asked if they could utilize a region of the state for the TICP. States should contact their ODP Preparedness Officer, who will review the request and work with the state to make a determination of eligibility.

Q11: We were named as the designated metropolitan area by our non-UASI state. What funding is being provided to support the development and exercise of a Tactical Plan?

A11: As detailed in the FY 2005 Grant Guidance, State Homeland Security Grant funds can be used for the planning and exercise of the TICP. Sites should work with their SAA to identify appropriate funding from the FY 2005 allocation.

Q12: The TICP is competing for our UASI site's time and resources. May we use the same resources across different working groups? May we use plans already in place or underway to meet the TICP requirements to exercise the NIMS scenario?

A12: Yes and yes. ICTAP encourages sites to use personnel across the different working groups, particularly where experienced staff are in short supply. ICTAP also encourages sites to adapt from current or proposed plans that meet the spirit and intent of the NIMS scenario. Please discuss using such plans and exercises already underway or planned within the next 12 months with your ODP Preparedness Officer.

Q13: We have a communications plan, do we need to re-do it in this template?

A13: If your site currently has a plan that includes the required components (governance, equipment inventory, equipment policies and procedures, training) of the TICP, you will not need to recreate the plan. However, all sites will need to develop the incident communications plan (Section 5 of the TICP template) to support the IED scenario. If you are unsure if your current plan is compliant with the TICP requirements, ICTAP support is available to review the plan.

Q14: How do we get NIMS Communications Unit Leader Training?

A14: The NIMS Integration Center is currently developing a training methodology and certification requirements for the Communications Unit Leader position. Once this has been finalized, ODP will provide the information to all sites developing TICPs.

Q15: Can ICTAP provide examples of legislation and memos of agreement/understanding that newer sites may use as examples and templates for governance?

A15: Yes. ICTAP will do so with the permission and concurrence of its state and local partners. Please contact your ICTAP Site Manager about your particular need. ICTAP can also provide examples of “sanitized” TICPs. These materials are available through your Site Manager and are being distributed to ICTAP points of contact at the UASI sites.

Q16: UASI locations are experiencing shortfalls in experienced staff to do planning work. What can ICTAP do to help?

A16: In addition to ICTAP’s offering sites “no cost” assistance in technical, operations and governance areas, Sites are reminded that UASI and state grants do allow for the hiring of staff and consultants. Some sites and states are retaining the part-time services of recently retired employees who are subject matter experts with regard to local/regional communications systems. Sites should contact their State Administrative Agencies (SAA) and their DHS Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP) Preparedness Officers about the specific provisions of the FY2005 Homeland Security Grant legislation.

State and local laws and regulations regarding employment and consulting will, obviously, be factors in a site’s decision to using Homeland Security grant funding for this purpose.

Q17: What about a lack of continuity in governance working groups when key appointed and elected officials do not continue with group?

A17: ICTAP recognizes that many jurisdictions experience this situation. We have found that the establishment of a permanent core membership within a UAWG’s interoperable communications organization and delegating certain authorities and approvals in writing can reduce the impact of such circumstances. ICTAP Site Managers can provide examples of lessons learned and best practices to help sites meet this challenge.

Q18: What is ICTAP doing about regional interoperability?

A18: The Department and ODP recognize that regional interoperability is the next challenge. Regional interoperable communications involve both intrastate and interstate collaboration. Since no one approach fits all cases, we encourage sites to coordinate with neighboring UASI regions, SAAs and ODP on using grant funds for regional interoperable communications. ICTAP helps states and urban areas identify best practices and standards that will enhance regional interoperability.

Q19: How do I request ICTAP assistance?

A19: ODP technical assistance available is provided without charge to eligible states and/or local jurisdictions.

All TA requests originate from the UASI or State Grantee and should be coordinated through the State Administrative Agency (SAA). SAAs submit requests for TA either to the ODP Preparedness Officer assigned to their state or through the ODP Helpline. A

request can be submitted to ODP in writing (via regular mail or email) or by telephone (followed by a written request).

Each request for TA should include a brief description of:

1. The nature and extent of the requestor's homeland security issue
2. The type of technical assistance needed
3. The relevant strategic goal and objective in the state or urban area homeland security strategy
4. The efforts taken to address the need and the identification of other jurisdictions or agencies in the region that have similar needs
5. Plans for maintaining and sustaining efforts
6. The requestor's desired TA schedule
7. UAWG POC

For further information on requesting technical assistance, contact the ODP Preparedness Officer assigned to your state. You can also call the ODP Help Line at (800) 368-6498 or email askcsid@dhs.gov.

Q20: What if I have additional questions?

A20: For more information on the TICP requirements please contact Keith Young, ICTAP Program Manager at (202) 786-9774 or keith.young@dhs.gov. You can also contact the Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk (CSID) at 1-800-368-6498 or askcsid@dhs.gov.